

ASSESSING EAST ASIAN HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT: A FOCUS ON ACADEMIC CULTURE

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East Asian Higher Education: General Scenarios

- In EA, the impact of Western academic models and institutions has been significant from the beginning and it remains important even in the contemporary period.
- No Asian university is truly Asian in origin. Higher education institutions in EA are not integrally linked to indigenous cultures.
- As part of an international scientific system, EA relates to scientific developments in the West, depends on Western science to provide paradigms and models, and looks to the West as the “gold standard” for higher education.
- EA’s universities do not compare favorably with those in North America, western Europe, or Australia.

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East Asian HE Development: An Overview

- Learning from the West, university development in EA has been impressive:
- Throughout EA, a Western-styled HE system has been well established.
- EA is becoming the world’s 3rd great zone of higher education, science and innovation, alongside North America and Western Europe/UK, with research powerhouses, and the fastest growth in scientific output.
- After absorbing Western knowledge for 1.5 centuries, most EA societies have upgraded their academic programs.

Research Building in East Asian Universities

- A number of Japanese universities have long achieved world-class status in terms of research and general academic quality.
- China’s growth of research has been exceptional, with an annual increase rate of 17% of science papers produced each year during 2000-2009.
- Aiming at a “creative economy” South Korea’s Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning budget increased to more than (USD equivalent) 12 billion for 2014.
- Singapore allocated 2.6 billion Singapore dollars (\$2.1 billion) for the operation of four universities in 2012.
- The production output of Taiwan’s R&D grew steadily from US\$2.49 billion in 2001 to US\$4.10 billion in 2012.

Setting Global (Western) Standard

East Asian higher education systems are rigorous in setting global research as the performance standard for their leading universities.

- National University of Singapore is stronger than all of Australia's universities in both research paper quantity and citation impact - in quantity and quality.
- Some middle-sized East Asian universities of science and technology have higher citation rates than the Australian National University, such as Hong Kong UST, Postech in Korea and Nankai in China (Maslen, 2012).

Assessing East Asian HE Development (i)

- EA's universities are even poised at the most exciting phase of their development, leaping ahead to join the distinguished league of the world's leading universities (Tan 2010).
- President Levin (2010) of Yale University often talks about the rise of (East) Asia's universities.
- Marginson (2011) has coined the "Confucian model" to describe EA's "effective" way to fund elite universities.
- Citing Marginson, Morgan (2011) writes that "Sun sets on Western dominance as East Asian Confucian model takes lead", and the "Confucian model" has put East Asia's universities at the cutting edge.

Assessing East Asian HE Development (ii)

- Although EA universities have made tremendous strides in terms of the volume and quality of research output, they generally still lag behind the best universities in the West.
- The notion of 'world-class' status in East Asian societies has been largely imitative rather than creative (Mohrman 2005).
- Financial and other resources combined with some innovation strategies can make progress only so far. Achieving 'World-class' status requires not only resources but also changing deeply entrenched academic practices. A kind of "glass ceiling" is to be reached soon (Altbach 2010).
- Developing 'world-class' universities in (East) Asia takes more than money and determination. (East) Asia faces great challenges as traditional Confucian pedagogy prevails (Levin 2010).

Assessing East Asian HE Development (iii)

- While there is an evident pride of the idea that EA universities are not willing to assume that Western models define excellence, very few have theorized their differences from Western universities (Jaschik 2011).
- Building their university identity is doomed to be an arduous task. What has been lacking is a cultural perspective that gives weight to the impact of traditional ways of cultural thinking on contemporary HE development.
- Their strikingly different cultural roots and heritages have led to continuous conflicts between the traditional Confucian and the imposed Western.
- With the emphasis always on practicality, the Western concept of a university has been taken for its usefulness.

Deeply Entrenched Academic Practices

- Some structural, academic, and cultural factors inhibit the best East Asian universities from rising to the pinnacles of academic quality in the near future and are likely to inhibit the improvement of EA's universities.
- East Asian societies have always attempted to indigenize the Western idea of a university.
- Integrating the Western concept has remained an unfinished business, with little success.
- We might need to ask ourselves whether or not there is a 'middle-income range/trap' in East Asian higher education development?

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Performances in ARWU: Chicago, Stanford and Tokyo

Universities	Chicago	Stanford	Tokyo
Found Year	1891	1885	1877
Institutional Ranking	8 th (06) 9 th (05, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14) 10 th (04) 11 th (03)	2 nd (03, 04, 07, 08, 09, 11, 12, 13, 14) 3 rd (05, 06, 10)	14 th (04) 19 th (03, 06, 08) 20 th (05, 07, 09, 10, 12) 21 st (11, 14) 22 nd (13)
Mathematics	23 rd	5 th	51 st -75 th
Physics	8 th	6 th	7 th
Chemistry	76 th -100 th	3 th	20 th
Economics/Business	2 nd	7 th	151 st -200 th
Social sciences	2 nd	7 th	151 st -200 th

Nobel Laureates at Chicago, Stanford and Tokyo, by 2014

Categories	University of Chicago	Stanford University	University of Tokyo
Chemistry	16	11	1
Economics	28	13	0
Literature	3	0	2
Peace	1	1	1
Physics	29	15	3
Medicine/Physiology	12	9	0
Total	89	49	7

Defining Academic Culture: Altbach (2004, 2010)

- Altbach (2004):
 - “academic life’ (research, the distribution of research, the students, and the academic profession) on page 14;
 - “academic institutional traditions” (academic freedom, institutional autonomy, the relationship of the university to society) on page 15;
 - (indigenous) “intellectual and academic traditions”, “academic model” and “the baggage of their historical past” on page 18;
 - “shallow roots in the soil of their countries-the norms and values of academe” on page 19;
- Altbach (2010):
 - “An academic culture that is based on meritocratic values, free inquiry, and competition” on page 4.

Defining Academic Culture: Shen (2012)

“Academic culture on campus is actually the external manifest of the common values, spirits, behavior norms of people on campus who are pursuing and developing their study and research. This kind of culture can be embodied in the rules and regulations, behavior patterns and the material facilities. It mainly consists of academic outlooks, academic spirits, academic ethics and academic environments.” (p. 61)

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Challenge One

- Contemporary Chinese universities are Western institutions without much linkage to their indigenous intellectual traditions.
- This is the fundamental reason for the failure of building an effective modern higher education system in China.
- The integration between Chinese and Western ideas of a university remains unfinished.
- There have been continuous efforts to indigenize the Western concept since the 19th century.
- The successes, however, have not been maintained, let alone enhanced.

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Challenge Two


- Chinese universities are an arm of the government, and their presidents are politicians rather than academic leaders.
- Academics seek instant success and quick profits (only).
- Misconduct and/or corruption is rampant in both academic and administrative affairs.
- Compared to Challenge One, such a culture hurts the Chinese system more directly with profound effects.
- It is far beyond the higher education sector to solve these widely spread and deeply rooted social problems.

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Concluding Remarks

- The two challenges deal China's higher education weighty blows.
- The Japanese achievement will remain the highest among non-Western societies including East Asia for quite some time to come.
- Without dramatic changes, China's possibility of surpassing Japan appears to be extremely slim.
- The bubbling and gurgling (in the media as well as in the literature) about China's rise in higher education, although evident in certain areas and to some degree, lacks a solid base.

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